

MAJ. GEN. LYNN STEVENS, USA (RET.), SPEAKS TO GRADUATES OF LAST PMC, FIRST APMC

“Equip Them Properly to Avoid War, and to Win If They Get Into It”

Collie J. Johnson

Speaking to the graduates of the last 20-week Program Management Course and the first 14-week Advanced Program Management Course on 9 June 1995 at the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC), Maj. Gen. Lynn H. Stevens, USA (Ret.), delivered a humorous, thought-provoking message on acquisition reform, its opportunities and limitations. Referring to his mother, an educator who devoted her whole life to influencing improvement of society through education, General Stevens noted that DSMC, as an institution, has that same role. “The graduates of this school are everywhere, and they do influence society for the better. We are all focused on the defense of our country — on the kinds of things that maintain the freedom that we enjoy. We know freedom is not free. We know that equipping the fighting forces is an enormous responsibility, and you graduates will have the opportunity to go forth and do just that.”

How Industry Sees Us

General Stevens, a former DSMC Commandant, spoke of his interface with industry throughout his tenure as DSMC's Commandant, and the defense industry's admiration for DSMC

as an institution. Describing a visit with senior officers of Martin Marietta [Lockheed Martin], he asked about the corporation's process of growing executives. The reply was startling, and ultimately revealing. Their executive development program included three educational options: Harvard, MIT, or DSMC. According to General Stevens, “I do not know that, institutionally, we could receive a better compliment than to be ranked in the mind of a businessman like Norman Augustine alongside the schools which train managers for that corporation.” He then reminded his audience that industry students are indeed of great value in the classroom, and DSMC must campaign aggressively for their continued attendance and support.

Speaking of past DSMC graduates, General Stevens noted that industry students and their military counterparts with whom he came in contact while Commandant, ultimately did quite well. Within the Northrop-Grumman Corporation, for example, several DSMC industry graduates rose through corporate ranks to become vice presidents. Likewise, many generals and colonels completed DSMC courses during his tenure as Commandant, and emerged as leading members of the professional acquisition workforce. “For whatever bad you

may think of the last 20 weeks you spent here, or even the last 14 weeks, forget it. It was a good experience — someday you will realize that.”

Doing More With Less, Doing the Same With Less, Doing Less With Less

General Stevens reiterated that the acquisition world is changing very rapidly, but perhaps the most challenging and interesting change — doing more with less, doing the same with less, doing less with less — will be our most daunting challenge. Daunting because, simultaneously, we are expected to perform more, particularly in the budget process and manning areas.

Comparing the 1995 budget with past years, General Stevens stated that the 1990 Five-Year Plan called for a DoD budget projected to be \$312 billion in 1995, of which \$131 billion would be for research, development, and acquisition (RD&A). Now, he continued, we are in 1995; the budget is \$252 billion, with \$71 billion in the RD&A portion — 100 percent of that \$60-billion cut came from RD&A. “Therein, ladies and gentlemen, lies your challenge.”

To illustrate the disparity between manning and oversight dollars versus

Ms. Johnson is Managing Editor, Program Manager, DSMC Press.

the dollars allocated to actually go out and develop weapons, he related a practical indicator of today's reality. Northrop-Grumman, 3 or 4 years ago, was a difficult place to park at 08:30 or 9:00 in the morning. Now, you can park just about any place you want, any time of the day. More than a million defense-related aerospace people have been taken out of the national system since 1987-88. Again, 4 or 5 years ago you could go to the Pentagon at 8:30 or 9:00 in the morning and not find a parking place. "I went by there this morning," he stated, "and guess what — you still can't find a parking place."

According to General Stevens, this is interesting because the size of the manning and oversight, and other aspects of government interaction are not visibly reduced, yet the budget that the graduates will manage — to go out there and make hardware for fighting troops — has been cut by over 40 percent in the 5 years of a Five-Year Plan. "The challenge is not small. You are going to have the opportunity to decide where the 'value added' resides. Are we going to maintain staff levels at their current manning in the laboratories and engineering offices? Or, are we going to bite that bullet and downsize along with industry so we can apply the money to equipping the fighting forces? That is the challenge — I know of no other way to present it."

Roles and Missions Commission Report

General Stevens believes there is room for consolidation within the Department of Defense. He discussed his interest in the Roles and Missions Commission Report, and emphasized that he understands that it deals more with Washington-area roles and missions, and headquarters-type roles and missions than it does with the battlefield. In many respects, he noted that it appropriately recognizes that the Service headquarters are probably over-staffed. It does not, however, appropriately recognize that the next level up is equally over-staffed, and,

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Maj. Gen. Lynn H. Stevens, USA (Ret.), speaks to DSMC graduates of PMC 95-1 and the College's first APMC, 9 June 1995, DSMC's Scott Hall, Fort Belvoir, Va.

in fact, moves some of the functions up. "I am not challenging the Roles and Missions Commission," he reassured his audience. "I am challenging

that the world we will proceed into — our new acquisition arena — will be one of streamlining and downsizing. So consolidations, ultimately are appropriate."

Specifications and Standards

Another area General Stevens discussed was the elimination of specifications and standards, and dealing with performance specifications. Though he believes it to be a great idea, he foresees major challenges in implementing specifications and standards reform. "There are people who have made an entire lifetime career in sincerely enforcing compliance with rules, and now they're being faded out. They really believed that what they were doing was right, and it probably was right in many respects."

Teaming

Teaming, General Stevens believes, in terms of the Integrated Product Team, will inevitably be another wave of the future. Moreover, he noted that there is already a tremendous amount of forward motion in that regard. He emphasized that teaming is very, very important in developing mutual confidence, mutual respect, and efficiencies of dollar savings.

Restrict Number of Controls

"We need to get away from some of the tremendously tight controls," he stated. "I used to talk to retired generals who would come back and say, 'Gosh, if I had known all that I know now about industry when I was on active duty and had a position of influencing policy, I would have tried to do things differently.'" He referred to the apparent irony that we, the government, ask contractors to do things that we really do not need to have them do, and then we pay them to do it. "The acquisition reform of the future," he countered, "is going to cause us to eliminate such practices." Speaking frankly to the graduates, he cautioned them not to expend all their manpower and money on oversight, checks, or other reports and plans that do not add to the product we [the

Photo by Richard Maittox

Maj. Gen. Lynn H. Stevens, USA (Ret.), is the Vice President and Manager of the Precision Weapons Department, and Program Manager for BAT Weapons, an anti-armor submunition being developed under contract for the Army by Northrop-Grumman Corporation. Previous to this, he held the position of Deputy Program Manager for BAT Weapons at Northrop. Prior to his retirement from the U.S. Army in July 1991, he was the 10th Commandant of the Defense Systems Management College.

professional acquisition workforce] are trying to get.

How Do We Get There

"How do we get there," he challenged the graduates. General Stevens then systematically outlined what he believes are key components toward this end. An important first step — get the test community on board. The operational tests are very expensive, he noted, and are not subject to the same kind of legislative reform as the acquisition community's policies and procedures. Because testing is very expensive, he reminded the graduates that those who planned a career in test and evaluation or who might wield some influence in that area needed to be sure that testing being required was indeed necessary. "The test community," he related, "has a very important and appropriate charter. They are independent and clearly have a reason to be. In your role as managers, you really do need to assure a proper balance of testing in light of the overall budget available."

Political Appointees And the Congress

The second step, according to General Stevens, involves communication with political appointees and Members of Congress. Political appointees, he observed, are also key players in the acquisition process. Knowing how to deal with political appointees and the Congress, in his view, is essential. "They are real, they are there, and they're very important. We cannot get the job done without them. Know who they are, their background, know their personal desires and strengths, because if you are trying to sell your program or justify something that they are challenging you on, you need to be aware of who you are dealing with. Be sure that you're attuned to what they want to do."

General Stevens admonished the graduates to be prepared to present their cases strongly and adequately. "It is futile," he stated, "and very ineffective to try to battle the Congress or political appointees. They are the tools to get success; bashing and working around them will bring you failure. Do not forget that as you go out to be successful, you need to be quite realistic about budgets — and effective interaction with the Congress and political appointees is integral to that process."

Ethics and the Government

General Stevens pinpointed, in his view, the single most important attribute of an acquisition workforce professional — integrity. He noted that in Northrop-Grumman, the code of ethics and rules of integrity are more severe than the DoD rules of ethics — and that is good. "Those folks are genuinely honest. If there is one thing you can get fired for without ceremony, it's being dishonest within your company or with your customer. I think that is widespread in industry."

Listen to the Voice of Experience

Offering further guidance to the graduates, he counseled them to take

advice from people who know what they are talking about. "And for those industry students in the audience," he continued, "this is an opportunity for industry to help." As the professional acquisition workforce prepares their requests for proposals and other related documents, he challenged them to invite the participation of their industry counterparts — and pay attention to what they have to say. "Allow for cooperative participation," he enjoined them. "Seek advice and listen to varied sources of advice — from people who know what they are talking about. It is very important that we do not let our ego cloud our thinking to the point we are not listening to someone who is giving us advice — someone who knows what they are talking about. Ultimately, failure to listen and heed good, sound advice, can ruin your whole program."

Summary

Concluding his remarks, General Stevens told the graduates that there are a lot of things going on now in the acquisition arena that have not been done before. "You are going to break new ground. You are going to have the opportunity to take risks and to see if it pays off. We can indeed learn together in this business of acquisition reform." Quoting Jim Jenson who worked for IBM, General Stevens remarked, "It is much easier to change the intentions of people, than it is to change their behavior." He believes that we need to consider behavioral changes to be successful in budgeting for defense, in projecting the national image of what defense is all about, with regard to equipping the forces in the face of acquisition reform and downsizing.

He then offered the graduates their last challenge from DSMC: "Let's get out of here and be successful managers. Congratulations — and may your entire future be full of good things for the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and others who depend on your wisdom to equip them properly to avoid a war, and to win it if they get into it."